

CENTRO CHA RECOGNITION FOR
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP**HON. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 2004

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise proudly today to congratulate the Long Beach Community Hispanic Association, a Long Beach community non-profit better known as Centro CHA, for their valuable service to the community.

Formed in 1992, Centro CHA's mission is to provide enhanced quality of life to Hispanic/Latino youth, families, and neighborhoods in the City of Long Beach through health and educational programs, social and economic enrichment, cultural arts, and after school programs.

Centro CHA is recognized in the City of Long Beach as a leading Hispanic/Latino grassroots community-based organization. Centro CHA serves as an advocate in efforts to reduce the gaps in services to low-income, underserved Hispanic/Latino youth, families, and neighborhoods.

The City of Long Beach is now the second largest city in California, with a population of nearly 458,000 new immigrants creating significant changes in ethnic distribution and a considerable increase in diversity. According to the 2000 United States Census, the Hispanic/Latino population represents almost 40 percent of the city's total population.

Centro CHA connects the public with vital linkages and resources to access healthcare, civic leadership, and educational institutions. Through cultural community forums, collaboration, and civic leadership, Centro CHA helps local service providers to connect these services to the Hispanic/Latino community. To make the public more aware of the community's activism, Centro CHA created an annual award.

The Nuestra Imagen Award recognizes local individuals and companies for their contributions to local Hispanic/Latino communities. The award is in its eighth year, and it has grown to be one of the most widely attended non-profit awards dinners in Los Angeles County. The awards ceremony coincides with Hispanic Heritage Month, as well as Mexican Independence Day, and celebrates "the exceptional achievements of outstanding individuals and corporations, all of whom foster the development of children, families and communities in the Greater Long Beach area."

I look forward to working with Centro CHA in the future for the betterment of our community.

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR
FREEDOM IN HONG KONG

SPEECH OF

HON. JAMES A. LEACH

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 13, 2004

Mr. LEACH. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 667, expressing support for democracy in Hong Kong. I would like thank the distinguished gentleman from California (Mr. Cox), as well as the distinguished Ranking

Member of the Committee on International Relations (Mr. LANTOS), for sponsoring this timely and important resolution.

As my colleagues are aware, this is the seventh year after Hong Kong's reversion to China. As the Department of State noted in an April 2004 report to Congress (as mandated by the U.S.-Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992), the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) remains an international city whose residents continue to enjoy protections of the rule of law and broad civil liberties.

As is also well-understood, the U.S. maintains substantial economic and political interests in Hong Kong and promotes Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy under Chinese sovereignty. Washington works closely with the authorities in Hong Kong on a wide range of international issues, not the least of which is cooperation in the global campaign against terrorism.

Having said that, developments over the last year have raised serious concerns, in the former British colony as well as around the world, regarding Beijing's commitment to respect the "high degree of autonomy" it has promised Hong Kong.

From a Congressional perspective, it appears self-evident that advancing democratization and constitutional reform—including universal suffrage—would contribute to the city's political stability and economic prosperity. The authorities in Beijing should realize that a vibrant, democratic and prosperous Hong Kong would be a tremendous asset to China. Hong Kong will only become a threat if China makes it so.

Even though the Basic Law may not technically require fuller democracy by 2007–2008, wisdom as well as respect for autonomy dictates the embrace of democracy for Hong Kong. Having traveled to Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines earlier this year, all of which have held successful local and national elections, I see no reason why Hong Kong—with all its wealth and sophistication—cannot do so also.

The people of Hong Kong made plain their aspirations for greater democratic autonomy, aspirations fully within the framework of the "one country, two systems" formula, when they so impressively demonstrated on July 1 last year. In the aftermath of those peaceful demonstrations, the Hong Kong government appeared to listen to the people and withdrew controversial national security legislation pending additional consultations with the populace of the city. The people of Hong Kong again showed their keen interest in participatory democracy when they turned out in record numbers for District Council elections last November, and in another large and peaceful pro-democracy demonstration on July 1st of this year.

In addition, in elections held on September 12, turnout was a record 1.784 million voters (55.63 percent of registered voters). However, pro-democracy candidates, perhaps stung by scandal, managed to gain only three seats for a total of 25, a disappointing outcome since opinion polls indicated stronger results under Hong Kong's complex electoral system.

The election results notwithstanding, one has the sense that the pace of democratization in Hong Kong appears inconsistent with the desires of a majority of the Hong Kong people. Indeed, recent decisions by Beijing setting limits on constitutional development in

Hong Kong appear to be inconsistent with the "high degree of autonomy" promised by the central authorities in the 1982 Joint Declaration and the Basic Law.

Equally dismaying has been a series of incidents in Hong Kong—from several political talk show hosts complaining of apparent threats against them, the appearance of a Chinese flotilla sailing through Victoria Harbor, an attack on the office of legislator Emily Lau, and recent allegations of harassment against the print media—that many perceive to be part of a campaign of intimidation against pro-democracy advocates in Hong Kong. Likewise, a new element in the September elections has been the concern of pro-democracy groups that mainland authorities were attempting to influence the outcome of the vote.

Although mainland officials insist that they continue to support the Basic Law's commitment to universal suffrage in Hong Kong, Beijing's actions indicate that the central authorities are profoundly concerned about the extension of democratic rights in the HKSAR. It is hard to know precisely why China has resisted Hong Kong's democratic aspirations, but what might be termed Beijing's "three confusions"—that reform might spin out of control, that democracy in Hong Kong would create a potentially destabilizing precedent for China, and a mistaken conflation of the situation in Hong Kong with the situation in Taiwan—are all possible explanations.

Whatever the reasons, they are unconvincing. One has the sense that China is moving into the world with increasing sophistication, yet maintains major misconceptions about Hong Kong.

There is also a "fourth confusion" which the United States itself should seek to avoid in its policy toward Hong Kong. By that, I mean America needs to find ways to strongly support the Hong Kong people's desire for democracy, electoral reform and universal suffrage without precipitating unnecessary Sino-American confrontation, damaging the interests of the people of Hong Kong or inadvertently undercutting the cause of Hong Kong's democrats.

Like Beijing, the U.S. has an enormous vested interest in the success of the "one country, two systems" model in Hong Kong. In this context, I believe it would be unwise and counterproductive at this time for the U.S. to review Hong Kong's treatment under the U.S.-Hong Kong Policy Act, as has been suggested in some quarters.

America needs to keep perspective. While the speed and scope of political change may be frustrating, Hong Kong still stands out on the Asian landscape as an enduring beacon for the rule of law and civil liberties.

I stress this because often in relations between states well-intentioned positions can be considered counterproductive. The U.S. Congress is obligated to comment on the importance of the people of Hong Kong being permitted to determine the pace and scope of constitutional developments and to move forward with democracy and electoral reform. However, we have no desire to be confrontational.

What is critical at this juncture is that all parties take credible steps to restore dialogue, build confidence, and seek compromise.

Whether the 21st Century is peaceful and whether it is prosperous will depend on whether the world's most populous country can live

with itself and become open to the world in a fair and respectful manner. Hong Kong is central to that possibility. As such, it deserves our greatest attention, respect, and good will.

Hong Kong is important unto itself; it is also a model for others. In particular, what happens there is watched with great interest by the people of Taiwan. In a globalist world where peoples everywhere are seeking a sense of community to serve as a buttress against political and economic forces beyond the control of individuals and their families, it is next to impossible to reconcile political systems based on unlike institutions and attitudes. Mutual respect for differences is the key to peace and prosperity in a world in which history suggests conflict has been a generational norm.

IN RECOGNITION OF ROBERT C.
THORNTON, JR.

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 2004

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, Staff Sgt. Robert C. "Robbie" Thornton, Jr., 35, of Fort Hood, TX, died on August 23, 2004 in Iraq. Staff Sgt. Thornton was a tank commander in the 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, TX, and was killed when his patrol came under rocket-propelled grenade attack. He is survived by his wife Ellen, and children, Bradley, 6, and Breanna, 3. He is the son of Dominique Thornton, of Belen, NM, and retired Lt. Col. Robert Thornton, Sr.

Robbie Thornton was eager to serve his country, Mr. Speaker, and loved classical music. He was a graduate of Jacksonville High School in Jacksonville, Alabama, where he was known for his athletic ability, and attended Jacksonville State University. Like every other soldier, he dutifully left behind his family and loved ones to serve our country overseas.

Words cannot express the sense of sadness we have for his family, and for the gratitude our country feels for his service. Staff Sgt. Thornton died serving not just the United States, but the entire cause of liberty, on a noble mission to help spread the cause of freedom in Iraq and liberate an oppressed people from tyrannical rule.

We will forever hold him closely in our hearts, and remember his sacrifice and that of his family as a remembrance of his bravery and willingness to serve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the House's remembrance on this mournful day.

IN APPRECIATION OF AIPAC

HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 2004

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, for more than half a century, the relationship between the United States and Israel has been a cornerstone of American national security and our commitment to freedom and democracy. During the cold war, Israel provided intelligence and support to our efforts to confront the tyr-

anny of Soviet communism. The experience gained by Israeli soldiers, who fought three major wars against armies equipped with the latest Soviet military equipment, was invaluable to our efforts to devise equipment and tactics to maintain military superiority over the Soviet Union.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, Israel has continued to act as a valuable partner in our efforts to bring stability and freedom to an increasingly volatile and unstable part of the world. In 1991, Israel absorbed numerous Iraqi SCUD missile attacks without retaliating, so as not to fracture the global coalition that was working to oust Saddam Hussein's troops from Kuwait. Throughout its history, but especially in the 1990s and into this decade, Israeli civilians have been killed in enormous numbers in an ongoing campaign of suicide bombings and other acts of terrorism by those who will never countenance the existence of the Jewish State. Even as they mourned their dead, Israelis worked for peace with their Arab neighbors and the Palestinian people.

Most remarkably, despite these existential challenges, Israel has remained a democracy. Surrounded by autocracies, dictatorships and monarchies who have made its destruction a centerpiece of their national identity, Israel has continued to hold regular elections and its politics are some of the most spirited and free-wheeling in the world. Truly, Israel has remained "a light unto the nations." Time and again, Israel has sacrificed its security for its values—most recently this summer when the Israeli Supreme Court ordered the government to reroute part of the security fence.

For many in Congress, AIPAC has been an invaluable asset in helping us to understand the many dimensions of the American-Israeli partnership. AIPAC is effective because it has a long track record of providing policymakers and Members with accurate, comprehensive information about the Middle East. It is not surprising that AIPAC's annual meeting and dinner is an important event for Democrats and Republicans, Members of Congress and administration officials, presidents, governors and mayors. Our attendance is a testament to the esteem in which we hold AIPAC and the partnership between Israel and the United States that it seeks to advance.

I have worked with AIPAC throughout my tenure in Congress and I have found AIPAC members to be dedicated, patriotic Americans who deeply believe that the security of the United States and the security of Israel are mutually dependent. And I look forward to many more years of working with AIPAC and its members to address common threats to our security and to freedom-loving nations around the globe.

THE ROAD TO RUSSIAN TERROR
GOES THROUGH SAUDI ARABIA

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 2004

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, the U.S. State Department announced today that for the first time Saudi Arabia has been placed on a list of countries who have engaged in "particularly severe violations" of religious freedom, and faces possible sanctions by the

United States as a result. Today's action simply underscores a point that I have made time and time again, namely, that the Saudis have been funding for many, many years madrassas where Wahhabism is taught, and Wahhabism is a radical fundamentalist Muslim religion that teaches children to hate Christians and Jews, and to perpetrate violent acts against them.

Wahhabism is also the philosophical and religious underpinning of Saudi-born Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida terrorist network. The simple fact is, wherever you find Wahhabis you will find fertile ground for al-Qaida and its supporters.

The Russian people learned this painful lesson when 30 Chechen rebels took control of a schoolhouse on the first day of school, and killed at least 338 people, half of them children who were going to school for their first day. According to the reports, 10 of those people who were terrorists were Arabs, and we believe that they were probably from Saudi Arabia. In addition, the attacks were reportedly planned by Shamil Basayev, a Chechen rebel commander, and financed by Abu Omar as-Seyf, a radical Islamic Wahhabite, who is not surprisingly believed to be associated with al-Qaida.

Mr. Speaker, I commend to my colleagues an article published in the September 20, 2004, edition of the *Weekly Standard* and written by Stephen Schwartz, entitled "The Road from Riyadh to Beslan." The article lays out quite clearly how the Chechen separatist movement has been hijacked by the Islamist radical Jihadist movement, and makes a compelling case that we must compel Saudi Arabia to cut off funding for global Wahhabism if we are to avoid more 9/11s and Beslans. I urge my colleagues to read this article and I would like to have the text of this article placed into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD following my statement.

[From the *Weekly Standard*, Sept. 20, 2004]

THE ROAD FROM RIYADH TO BESLAN

(By Stephen Schwartz)

Three roads led to the horror at Beslan in the Russian republic of North Ossetia in which at least 330 people, most of them children, died: one road beginning in Grozny, the capital of neighboring Chechnya; one road beginning in Moscow, to the north; and one road beginning in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, far to the south. Americans need to know how such frightful events are connected to the global war on terror, and the degree to which they must threaten our own peace of mind.

The main culprits in Beslan were Islamic extremists. Since at least 1999, these violent fanatics, with backing from the Wahhabi sect of Saudi Arabia and financial support from radicals throughout the global Muslim community, have assiduously agitated to take over the Chechen national movement (about which more in a moment).

The participation of "Arabs"—meaning Saudis and other Wahhabi influenced Muslim foreigners—is a constant in reportage and comment on Beslan and earlier terrorist incidents in Chechnya, as well as in neighboring Ingushetia, in Georgia, and in Russia itself. The majority of Chechens, most of whom want only to be left alone, are not averse to the Wahhabi offensive, which is one reason most attacks now take place outside Chechnya.

Meanwhile, the Islamists hope to exploit old rivalries between the Chechens, Ingushes, and other Muslim peoples of the Caucasus